

Celebrating a decade of farming's favourite festival



“Celebrating our tenth birthday feels like a milestone.”

ALEX CHERRY

In just 10 years, Groundswell has evolved from a relatively small, field-based show with big dreams to an annual celebration of how to do farming differently. CPM speaks to organiser Alex Cherry for insight into how the team is marking this important milestone.

By Janine Adamson

While Groundswell may have looked a little different 10 years ago, particularly the scale of attendees and infrastructure involved, show organiser Alex Cherry is keen to stress that its heart and soul very much remain the same.

“There’s such a hunger for knowledge about regenerative farming and that’s always been our focus – filling the gap and trying to address the learning that growers actually want,” he says.

To put it plainly, the Groundswell effect is impressive. The show attracts around 10,000 visitors each year and continues to build – recently drawing more than 650 session applications, equating to 2000+ speakers, for the upcoming event on 1-2 July.

Alex confesses that while this was never the end goal, the show has simply

evolved ‘organically’. “Celebrating our tenth birthday does feel like a milestone. Other than 2020 which was the Covid-19 year when we had to cancel, it’s completely consumed our lives.

“So it’s a good moment to reflect, especially when you think about what the agricultural industry has been through during those 10 years. It’s also timely to celebrate, present fresh and practical ideas, offer a sense of hope, and of course, deliver critical farmer-to-farmer knowledge exchange.”

For Alex, the balance of the show has reached its optimum – blending familiar faces with new, youth with experience, and crossing boundaries in terms of overall demographic. “Looking back at those early photographs, it’s amazing to see some of the same faces continue to return.

“But at the same time, the demographic has shifted. We’re attracting a more equal gender ratio as well as a younger, alternative audience. I think that reflects the positive direction of where we hope the industry can go.”

Staying true to itself is something that Groundswell undoubtedly does well. Rather than outsource aspects such as the running of the Earthworm Arms on-site bar, the same manager has successfully overseen proceedings since day one. “The Earthworm Arms started as a small venue with borrowed



Challenging themes

The speaker line-up continues to challenge ‘big’ topics, albeit the stages have grown considerably in size. *Groundswell pictured in 2018.*

► chairs, but now it plays apart in a huge food court with a Big Top party tent and 40 different independent food traders.

“So in ways it’d be easy to sell out, but we don’t want to do that. It’s important that the local economy benefits from the show, while remaining loyal to our long-term suppliers,” stresses Alex.

And the speaker line-up continues to challenge ‘big’ topics, this time focusing on the role of nutrient density and the wider food chain. “Bringing key players together at Groundswell 2026 to hopefully understand that conversation better will no doubt be challenging, but hopefully help the industry to make progress,” states Alex.

This line-up includes author of Number 1 *Sunday Times* best seller, *Ultra Processed People*, Chris Van Tulleken. Published in 2023, the book follows Chris in his travels through the world of food science to explore the true impact of ultra processed foods. Alex says the show is very lucky to have Chris as a confirmed speaker at this year’s show.

In a similar vein, Groundswell will play host to the UK premiere of the latest release from the ‘*Kiss the Ground*’ film series. Also named ‘Groundswell’, the film is captured with blockbuster Hollywood flair, and investigates regenerative agriculture across the world.

“During the film, the journey concludes at Groundswell, our show, with footage portraying Gabe Brown meeting The Prince of Wales at last year’s event. It’s quite poignant to have this coincide with our 10-year anniversary. It’s a very powerful message for a global audience – that regenerative farming has the potential to save the planet,” explains Alex.

Other key speakers include Dr Johnathan Lundgren, prominent



Sociable times

Meeting up with friends new and old will always be a central focus for Groundswell. Pictured in 2021.

American soil scientist and regenerative farming advocate; and Dr Allen Williams, a sixth generation American rancher celebrated for grass-fed beef production.

Then, no-dig pioneer Charles Dowding is back to cater for those with an interest in market gardens and vegetable production, highlights Alex. “There’ll also be a series of artwork installations across the event site to embody circular economics – I’m really looking forward to seeing those,” he adds.

As always, the speaker line-up includes international influences, notably a session on large-scale regenerative sugar cane production in Zambia. Alex points out there’s a strong contingent from Europe among the speakers too, to hopefully build on recent improved connectivity of the regenerative agriculture movement across the continent.

“We have so many amazing speakers this year, we’ve never been prouder of the quality of content on offer. The committee has worked really hard and I hope that’s obvious for attendees when they see the line-up for themselves.”

However, as much as Groundswell is for learning, it’s also gained a reputation for providing a moment for visitors to let their hair down for a day or two.

Alex notes an increase in folk music for this year’s show, with the possibility of a ceilidh dance for those interested.

“A band I’m particularly looking forward to is Alan Power and the Take Twos – a Stetson-clad country band from Somerset,” he says. “They should bring an alternative slant to the entertainment on offer.” While for those focussing on content curation, there’s a new podcast tent to cater for those in that trade.

And despite the significant improvements to the logistics seen last year, this remains a work in progress, points out Alex. “It’s not the most exciting of aspects to note, but we’ve hired a new traffic management and shuttle bus company who’ve redesigned the access system for attendees. This includes a new North entrance for glampers and live-in vehicles, to hopefully improve not only motorised traffic, but pedestrian flow too,” he explains.

Of course, all of this relies on punters continuing to turn up, to keep the Groundswell dream alive. Therefore, in recognition of the current cost of living and general economies of agriculture, the organisers have decided to introduce special ‘farmer’ tickets.

“These are subsidised at a lower rate than standard delegate passes. We took this decision to reflect where we currently are as an industry, and to hopefully help a little where possible,” concludes Alex. ●

To book a ticket for Groundswell Festival, which takes place 1-2 July at Lannock Farm in Hitchin, visit groundswellag.com



Drawing the crowds

As shown last year (2025), Groundswell has become a popular focal point during the agricultural show calendar.